

December 5, 1973

The Robert A. Welch Foundation  
2010 Bank of the Southwest Building  
Houston, Texas 77002

Dear Sirs,

I am pleased to be able to support the nomination of Carl Djerassi, Professor of Chemistry here at Stanford, for the Robert A. Welch Award in Chemistry.

I have been privileged to know Professor Djerassi as a colleague and friend for over 10 years. We have collaborated in a number of areas, most closely and recently in studies on the uses of computer programs in new ways to enhance "scientific judgment" in chemical research.

Dr. Djerassi has had so many successful careers that it is difficult to believe they are embodied in one man. His work in industry, first as one of the prime movers of the Syntex Corporation, and then in the establishment of Zoecon are prototypes of the convergence of industrial enterprise, scientific depth and acumen, and social utility. I am sure his career will be an inspiration to young chemists for many generations to come! I am sure you are well acquainted with Syntex in view of its astonishing history as an industrial enterprise. You may have only just heard of Zoecon which promises to introduce dramatic new approaches in the development of chemical pesticides based on highly sophisticated knowledge of insect physiology and very careful pre-judgment and laboratory testing for factors of safety to man and the human environment.

All the foregoing would have been enough to more than satisfy the aspirations of most men, but Djerassi has also had multiple careers in academic life as well, any one of which might very well have been prize worthy -- for example by the standards of the Nobel Foundation. In fact, I am rather surprised that he has not already been recognized in just that way, but one can see a number of exterior circumstances -- for example the political conflicts about the uses of oral contraceptives, and the fact that any enterprise of that magnitude has necessarily important inputs from a number of other individuals who would deserve to share recognition within the framework of that kind of award. This side-comment is by way of justifying the responsibility of other sources of praise, recognition, and emulation for the inspiration of others.

His work in the organic chemical laboratory has been extraordinarily productive in several fields, including the elucidation of the structure of innumerable natural products, the development of the technique of optical rotatory dispersion, and then again of mass spectrometry for structural analytical purposes. The evolution of the latter to automated

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computer control is the arena of our joint efforts eluded to previously.

I realize that this must not play a primary role in your deliberations but I feel obliged to comment on Djerassi's attribute as a human being, not only in his personal relationships as an individual but in the zest and energy that he has applied in many arenas of international public service.

I can think of no one who would be better qualified for recognition by your award.

Sincerely yours,

Joshua Lederberg  
Professor of Genetics

JL/rr